## REMARKS

This is in response to the Office Action mailed on <u>May 5, 2004,</u> and the references cited therewith. Claims 1, 6, 11 and 17 are amended; claims 1-18 remain pending in this application.

### §*103 Rejection of the Claims*

Claims 1-18 were rejected under 35 USC § 103(a) as being unpatentable over Alles et al. (U.S. Patent No. 6,466,976 B1) in view of De Boer et al. (U.S. Patent No. 6,658,013 B1).

Alles describes an internet service node which applies packet processing rules in determining how to handle message packets received, for instance, at the edge between an ISP and its subscribers. A customized set of service policies is associated with each user. The set of service policies is translated into processing rules, with each processing rule containing a classifier and an associated action (see, e.g., Figs. 5A and 5B). As can be seen in Figs. 5A and 5B, the classifier generally specifies the data flow and any conditions under which the action can be applied to a set of data bits transferred on the data flows.

The patent issued to de Boer describes a system and method for delivering communications services between two rings, wherein each ring includes a plurality of network element.

In contrast to Alles and de Boer, Applicant teaches, and claims in claims 1-18, that it can be advantageous to provide a ring network connecting a plurality of processors, where the processors are capable of performing both internet layer and application layer processing (also referred to as host services) of the messages received on a data flow. There is no discussion of application layer processing of data in any of the references cited by the Examiner. Reconsideration of claims 1-18 is respectfully requested.

In addition, Applicant teaches, and claims in claims 2-5, 7-10 and 12-18, providing different types of processors in order to perform these functions. As shown in Fig. 8 and as described at p. 15, line 6 through p. 16, line 5, control blades provide services such as overall system supervision, IP route calculation, software update management, and network management statistics logging services. Processor blades perform services such as application layer firewall and LT2P. Access blades provide physical line termination and may provide hardware-assisted encryption and queue management services. None of the references cited by

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the Examiner describe the use of three types of processors such as is described and claimed by Applicant.

Furthermore, there is no discussion in any of the cited references of the use of virtual routers as described by Applicant and claimed in claims 3, 4, 8, 9, 13, and 14. By using virtual routers, Applicant is able to more effectively match processor and memory bandwidth to the services provided to each subscriber.

Finally, there is no discussion of providing application layer firewall protection. Claim 17 has been amended to more clearly defined this aspect of the invention.

## Conclusion

Applicant respectfully submits that the claims are in condition for allowance, and notification to that effect is earnestly requested. The Examiner is invited to telephone Applicant's attorney at (612) 373-6909 to facilitate prosecution of this application.

If necessary, please charge any additional fees or credit overpayment to Deposit Account No. 19-0743.

Respectfully submitted,

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I hereby certify that this paper is being transmitted by facsimile to the U.S. Patent and Trademark Office on the date shown below.

Thomas F. Brennan

_August 5, 2004_
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